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House Education Committee

April 2, 2009

380.1481 in the Revised School Code created the Michigan virtual university (MVU) and was initiated /enacted for the 2000-01 School Year.

State Aid funding was also provided to MVU beginning in 2000-01 in Section 388.1698 and directed to create the Michigan virtual high school (MVHS).

The MVHS was created to help develop virtual learning in Michigan and funding was provided to develop courseware for on-line learning. Prior to 2000-01, some ISDs in Michigan had two-way interactive distance learning programs but had not yet developed virtual learning. The stated goals for 2000-01 and beyond, in Sec. 388.1698, included:

- (a) Significantly **expand curricular offerings** for high schools across this state through agreements with school districts or licenses from other recognized providers.
- (b) **Create a statewide instructional model** using interactive multimedia tools delivered by electronic means, including, but not limited to, the internet, digital broadcast, or satellite network, for distributed learning at the high school level.
- (c) Provide pupils with opportunities to **develop skills and competencies through on-line learning.**
- (d) **Offer high school teachers opportunities to learn new skills and strategies** for developing and delivering instructional services.
- (e) Accelerate this state's ability to **respond to current and emerging educational demands.**
- (f) **Grant high school diplomas** through a dual enrollment method with school districts.
- (g) **Act as a broker for college level equivalent courses**, as defined in section 1471, and dual enrollment courses from postsecondary education institutions.

Pursuant to MCL 388.1698, the **Michigan virtual high school course offerings** shall include but are not limited to, all of the following:

- (a) **Information technology courses.**
- (b) **College level equivalent courses**, as defined in section 1471 of the revised school code, MCL 380.1471.
- (c) Courses and **dual enrollment** opportunities.
- (d) Programs and **services for at-risk pupils.**

(e) General education development (**GED**) **test preparation** courses for adjudicated youth.

(f) Special interest courses.

(g) **Professional development** programs and services for teachers.

Over time, MVU and MVHS have been provided additional funding to take on new tasks such as:

- Provide on-line teacher training for several state initiatives
- Provide access to such support systems as My Dream Explorer – a career development tool for schools and students
- Capacity building grants

In 2003-04, new language was provided to allow “a **home-schooled or nonpublic school student**, if they are a resident of a district that subscribes to services provided by the Michigan virtual high school, use of the services provided by the Michigan virtual high school to the district without charge to the student beyond what is charged to a district pupil using the same services” (now in Section 388.1698 (8)).

The **relationship of MVU and MVHS with other state agencies and school districts** is very unique in Michigan. As the Legislature has continued to define the goals of MVU and MVHS for state funding purposes, it has required additional reporting to the Legislature to determine the deliverables provided through this state funding (added in 2007-08 State School Aid Act).

During this 10-year period, there are **many more available vendors** to schools and students providing virtual learning and on-line learning options including those provided through and by ISDs. In fact, such on-line learning is now a part of the Michigan Merit Curriculum. One does have to ask **why Michigan uses state aid funding to subsidize one such vendor** over others; **especially when those services are ultimately sold back to local school districts** and schools.

Increasingly, ISDs are working with High Priority Schools through the Statewide System of Support as well as the Title I Accountability Grant. ISDs are charged to help these schools **focus their school improvement planning** and draw on resources that will help to meet those goals. **ISDs are then necessarily building a repertoire of sources of programs and services that can meet these needs** – up to and including on-line learning for professionals and students. Further, **ISDs are a network that does have broad state infrastructure** to support all school districts and schools. Further, ISDs have access to many more virtual or on-line learning tools.

Finally, I **caution us all to jump to the conclusion that on-line learning will provide the necessary instructional supports to all students** in our schools. This negates the volumes of research that a teacher matters. While on-line learning and virtual tools are very instructionally sound, many are still text-based learning with some audio and video support. Most students still derive tremendous benefit from face-to-face learning and instruction. Virtual learning still yields the most benefit when provided in support of an instructional classroom or with a mentor face-to-face teacher.

Respectfully submitted by,

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Roch, Rebecca

From: Oswalt, Mike
Sent: Thursday, April 02, 2009 9:01 AM
To: Roch, Rebecca
Subject: Online Learning

Importance: High

Thanks for asking...I'm a bit passionate about this!

- While it is imperative to prepare our students with online learning experiences, it is equally important to provide educators and administrators with professional development and resources necessary for them to provide that experience to students
- The Michigan Schools Online Title IID grant awarded to Genesee in partnership with REMC Association is designed to begin to do just that – create a portal of resources, provide free online Algebra I course, and provide professional development opportunities
- Funding should be allocated to further increase the professional development opportunities for teachers who are learning how to teach in a very different way; change in practice can't be accomplished overnight – ongoing funding to support teachers with PD and resources is essential for sustainability.
- ISDs and their REMCs are providing leadership statewide and locally in helping school districts meet the online learning requirement. Funding to help schools buy the resources they need should be provided through the ISDs/REMCs due to their already established relationship with the schools and involvement with this requirement.
- Providing the funding to ISDs/REMCs to purchase online learning experiences/courses broadens the possibilities for students, rather than limits it to one provider.
- While self paced online courses do meet the requirement, leaders need to be reminded that in the MDE guidelines for online learning, they are allowable, but not recommended. See below

Excerpt from the guidelines – page 6:

If the online course is being taken for high school credit it is recommended that this format not be used by schools as a strategy to meet the online learning provision contained in Michigan's high school graduation requirements.

* The communication provided by the instructor serves as a tremendous motivator for students. Research has shown that without this type of communication, many students fail to follow through with an online course or activity (*Interaction and Immediacy in Online Learning*, Robert H. Woods, Jr., Jason D. Baker, The International Review of Research in Open And Distance Learning, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2004)). Students who have teachers that build an online relationship with them have been shown to be most successful when taking online courses or participating in an online experience.

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